

SPAWAR Systems Center New Orleans Customer Support Center Finalist for Government Customer Support Excellence Award

By Maria LoVasco Tolleson, Public Affairs Officer

The Space and Naval Warfare Systems Command (SPAWAR) Systems Center (SSC) New Orleans, Customer Support Center (CSC) was named one of the top three customer support centers in the area of customer focus at the Government Customer Support Conference in May.

The CSC competed with top support centers around the nation, which included all levels of local, state and federal government. Other finalists included the Social Security Administration, Utah State Government and NASA.

The Government Customer Support Community of Practice (GCSCoP), nominated the SSC New Orleans Help Desk for the award. The GCSCoP is a federal help desk forum created to promote excellence in supporting government internal and external customers. Currently, several thousand organizations from all three levels of the U.S. government (and some foreign governments) participate in the GCSCoP.

The CSC is a critical part of SSC New Orleans providing information technology services and support to the Department of the Navy and Defense Department.

"Our vision is to increase business opportunities by providing superior capabilities, perseverance and outstanding customer support," said Mr. Jamie Passaro, SSC New Orleans director of customer services. "We view challenges as opportunities, and we strive to adjust to ever changing requirements without changing our core customer support principles."

SSC New Orleans, an echelon III field activity under SPAWAR, consists of about 1,100 military, civilian and contractor personnel who provide a full range of information technology products and services from requirements identification and analysis, systems and production engineering and telecommunications support, to architec-

ture design, quality assurance, Navy human capital development and homeland security.

Additionally, SSC New Orleans supports the Program Executive Office for Information Technology (PEO-IT) in the development of the Defense Integrated Military Human Resources System (DIMHRS) and other military human resources information technology programs.

The help desk provides support 24 hours a day, 365 days a year for nine systems and includes: the Navy Standard Integrated Personnel System (NSIPS); Navy Reserve Pay Helpdesk; Navy Reserve Order Writing System (NROWS); Job Advertising and Selection System (JASS); Medical Readiness Reporting System (MRRS); Inactive Manpower and Personnel Management Information System (IMAPMIS); Reserve Headquarters Support (RHS); Reserve Standard Training Administration and Readiness Support (RSTARS); Health Professions (HP); local base operations; electronic data warehousing (EDW); and Corporate Data Maintenance (CDM), formerly known as the Personnel Pay Assistance Center (PPAC).

Through these systems, the center supports a customer base of 537,000 personnel from every Naval activity, including fleet units. The center also provides support to the Air National Guard and Marine Corps.

Fifty customer service engineers with backgrounds in functional and customer support staff the center. In the last 12 months, they have fielded more than 215,000 calls and already this year have responded to 67,000 service requests.

With an annual volume of more than 225,000 calls and total service requests in excess of 260,000, SSC New Orleans is the largest source of support in the Navy reporting to the Global Distance Support

"We've been successful because we have developed true partnerships with our Navy customers ..."

- Jack Walbridge, help desk manager



Customer Support Center employees, Ms. Joan Baham (standing) and Ms. Felicia Smith.



Leonard Ball, help desk pay technician (left) and Mike Redoutey, Navy Standard Integrated Personnel System (NSIPS) tech lead.



Help Desk personnel receive instruction in the training room. Jack Walbridge, help desk manager, is at the podium.

Center (GDSC), formerly known as the Navy Integrated Call Center. The CSC is part of the SPAWAR Distance Support Community.

In addition to the central facility in New Orleans, there are waterfront support groups located in Norfolk, Va., and San Diego, Calif., which provide NSIPS, quality of life and training support directly to fleet units. These units are comprised of both Sailors and civilian personnel who can respond quickly to emergent fleet requirements.

Mr. Jack Walbridge, a STI-certified (industry certification) help desk manager, heads the Customer Support Center. Ninety percent of the staff has 20 or more years of support experience with Navy quality of life applications. A large percentage of the staff are retired from military service, with 75 percent from military pay and personnel backgrounds and 67 percent from travel order preparation backgrounds.

Because of their military experience, the Customer Support Center staff have seen the entire range of pay and personnel problems in the fleet, and they understand the importance of rapidly solving quality of life issues.

The CSC teams with systems and production engineers to ensure successful support early in the program life cycle. They work directly with program managers for testing, validation and training.

According to Mr. Tom Ledet, program manager for the Navy Reserve Order Writing System, the SSC New Orleans Help Desk has a significant impact on the NROWS reputation. "The group consistently provides accurate and timely responses to all questions and problems reported by the field users. It is truly one of the best teams I have worked with," Ledet said.

Prior to his assuming command as commanding officer of Naval Air Station Joint Reserve Base, Fort Worth, Texas, Capt. John McCormack served as the Commander, Naval Reserve Forces program manager for NROWS.

"The SSC New Orleans Help Desk is a shining example of doing business right," McCormack said. "The professionalism and dedication displayed by the team is un-



Ms. Velvet Knight, Navy Reserve Order Writing System (NROWS) subject matter expert (foreground) and Ms. Susan Stringfield, NROWS tier 1 technician.

matched in any support center I have ever dealt with. I have never before experienced the kind of ownership the SSC New Orleans Help Desk took in our program, it made all the difference in the world."

A look at the latest metrics on the Distance Support Content Central Web site (<http://www.anchordesk.navy.mil/CntMgmt/CntCentral.htm>) reveals that SSC New Orleans serviced more calls in the past month than the other top 10 help desks combined.

"I'm very pleased with SSC New Orleans' participation in the Sea Warrior Help Desk Integration with the Distance Support initiative," said Ms. Terri Clark, supervisory program analyst in the Functional Integration Directorate at the Naval Personnel Development Command.

"The SSC New Orleans representatives are providing their help desk operations expertise, as well as their leadership skills, to support our transition to an integrated Sea Warrior Help Desk system with Distance Support," Clark said.

The CSC developed and implemented a customer service request system that is based on the Remedy Action Request System application. The center uses Remedy Distributed Server Option for transferring service request data to SPAWAR San Diego for statistical reporting. Crystal Reports is used to develop customized reports for customers. Using the Remedy system, personnel can generate, update and track service requests. The system also creates knowledge-based solutions for common problems.

Escalations and notifications are generated based on defined rules. Escalations are originated for a service request when it has been waiting too long in a queue. When this occurs a notice is sent to a supervisor or manager to take action.

The center has automated service request generation capabilities using an interface between a Computer Associates application called, Unicenter Network and System Management, and Remedy. When a monitored server has a threshold that has been exceeded a service request is automatically generated in Remedy and routed to the appropriate technician for resolution.

This methodology allows personnel to track and report issues related to the availability and performance of a system. In addition, personnel use Asset Management and Performance Management components to inventory the hardware and software loaded on a server.

For telephony, the center has a private branch exchange (PBX) Avaya G3R with a full range of call management capabilities.

"We've come a long way in a relatively short period of time. Over the last five years, we've grown from a staff of 10 to a staff of 50," Walbridge said.

To be recognized as one of the top three Customer Support Centers in the federal government for customer focus is a testament to the professionalism of our entire staff and to the seriousness with which SPAWAR views quality of life issues for our Sailors and their families.

"We've been successful because we have developed true partnerships with our Navy customers and government leadership. We're part of SPAWAR's Strategic Vision which means that the importance of providing great support is not just a function of the CSC, it's a total commitment from SPAWAR," Walbridge said.

Due to the effects of Hurricane Katrina, SSC New Orleans is temporarily closed. CHIPS